

UWS Complaints Handling Procedure Session 15/16 - Annual Report

1. Introduction

This report provides brief details on how the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) dealt with its complaint handling procedures for academic session 2015/16

2. UWS Complaints Handling Procedures

The Scottish Higher Education model Complaints Handling Procedure (the model CHP) was developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)¹ in partnership with a working group of Higher Education (HEI) complaints experts.

The purpose of the 'model CHP' is to provide a standardised approach to dealing with complaints across the Higher Education sector in Scotland. In particular, the aim is to implement a consistent process for students and other users to follow which makes it simpler to complain, ensures staff and complainant confidence in complaints handling and to encourage public bodies to make best use of the lessons learned from complaints.

The model relies on a two stage process:

1. Stage 1 Frontline Resolution - the School or Professional Services Department will attempt to resolve the complaint quickly (ideally within five working days).
2. Stage 2 Complaint Investigation - where Stage 1 has not been able to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant then a Stage 2 investigation will be initiated. A Stage 2 investigation is dealt with by a trained senior member of staff; they should aim to complete the investigation within 20 working days.

Details of the University's Complaint Handling Procedure can be accessed from: <http://www.uws.ac.uk/complaints>

3. Reporting on Complaints

This is third annual report on how UWS deals with complaints using the SPSO Complaints Handling procedure model. The report is for the period 1st August 2015 to 31st July 2016. The diagrams on Pages 5-8 provide a pictorial representation of the University's complaints handling performance.

¹ The SPSO Web site provides more information on the service - <http://www.spsso.org.uk/>

4. Analysis of the information

Stage 1

Last year there were 64 Stage 1 complaints while this year there were 51. This reduction is a welcome annual improvement, together with the excellent average completion rate of 4.5 days.

The pattern in the categories of Stage 1 complaints shown in the graph on Page 6 is similar to that for last year. 'Student Experience' is again the largest complaint category. However as this category covers a wide range of issues and problems identified by students it is probably to be expected. It is noted that last year we had 11 'Student Experience' Stage 1 complaints while this year we had 17.

Stage 2

In session 2014/15, 12 Stage 2 complaints were investigated while this year 9 Stage 2 complaints were dealt with. The average time to resolve a Stage 2 Complaint this year was 15 days. This is an excellent result in comparison to last year when it the 20 working day time window was slightly exceeded. This was partly due to a complex contractual dispute investigation.

5. Changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of the consideration of a complaint

It is important to learn any lessons from a complaint, in order to minimise repeat complaints and to improve the services we provide to our students and stakeholders. In this light Schools, Departments and Stage 2 Investigation Officers are expected to provide 'lessons learned' information at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaints process.

The University has a database of the lessons learned information captured during the complaints process. The Stage 1 information is provided by individual Schools and Professional Services Departments when completing the Stage 1 complaints process. The Stage 2 information is provided by the Stage 2 Complaint Investigating Officer and is sent to the relevant School or Professional Services Department at the conclusion of the Stage 2 investigation.

The lessons learned this year were as follows:

Category of Complaint	Outcome	Action	Lessons learned
Application Process	Partially Upheld	Apology to complainant, and explanation of procedures etc. Clarification regarding correct member of Staff who responded to the complainant and the development of an action plan to review communication processes.	Amendment of Internal processes recommended
Assessment Administration/ Calculation	Upheld	Email to Student covering all points of complaint and acknowledging a change of decision	
Failure to follow an appropriate admin process	Upheld	Unconditional offer to applicant.	Admin procedures to be addressed.
Failure to follow an appropriate admin process	Partially Upheld	Letter to Graduate with apology, explanation and outcome.	Amendment of some internal processes
Finance - outstanding debt	Upheld	Apology to student regarding confusion - outstanding account	Amendment of internal processes recommended
Lack of or quality of feedback to student	Partially Upheld	Apology to complainant -protocol not followed when informing results.	Academic staff to ensure a consistent and effective communication process is adhered to in future.
Lack of or quality of feedback to student	Partially Upheld	Apology to the complainant -protocol not followed when informing results.	Assessment team to ensure a consistent and effective communication process with students is adhered to in future

Lessons Learned (cont'd)

Category of Complaint	Outcome	Action
Student Experience	Not Upheld	Invigilator training to be implemented regarding discretion and ensuring students belongings are left in a designated area prior to the Exam.
Student Experience	Not Upheld	Email to student. Explaining each point. Acknowledging & Addressing actions within school.
Student Experience	Not Upheld	Letter to MP addressing UWS compliance with GTCS requirements

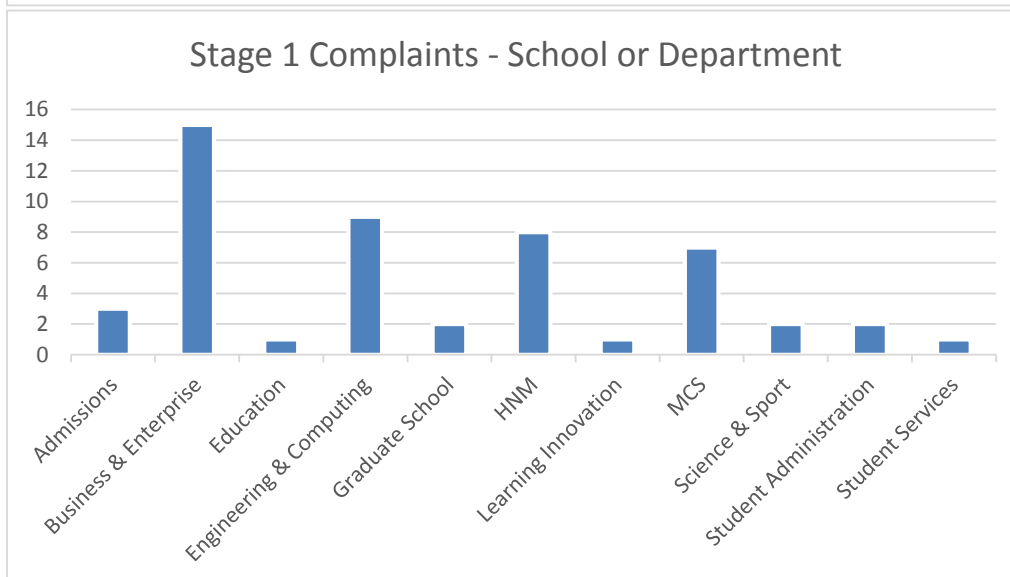
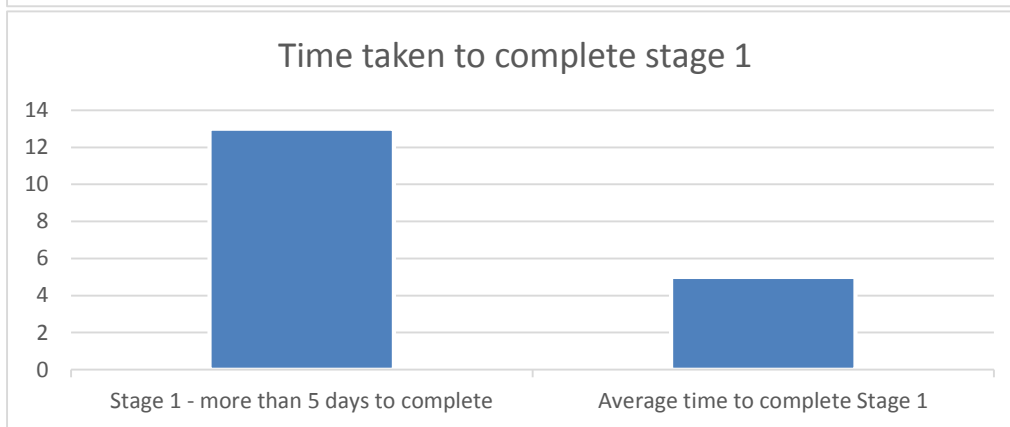
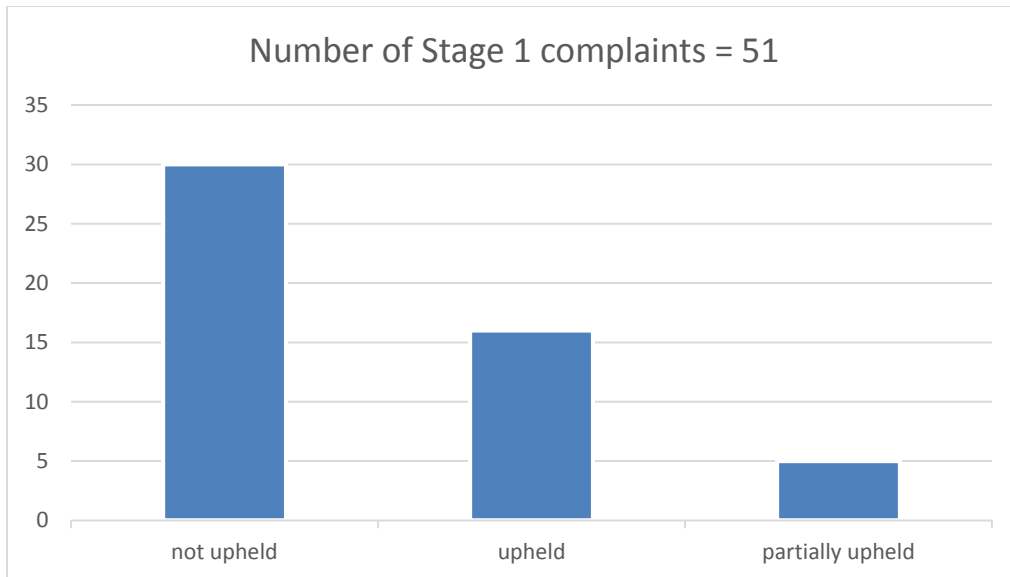
6. Future developments

It is pleasing to note the reduction in the number of Stage 1 complaints, indicating that the Schools and Professional Services Departments are getting better at dealing with issues, concerns and problems before they become complaints. It is also excellent that deadlines have been met under the required 5 days for Stage 1 and 20 days for Stage 2.

To further embed complaints into the University's enhancement process this report, together with more specific School/Department complaints information, will be sent to each of the Schools and Professional Services Departments. This will allow the Schools and Professional Services Departments to use this feedback in the production of their annual development plans.

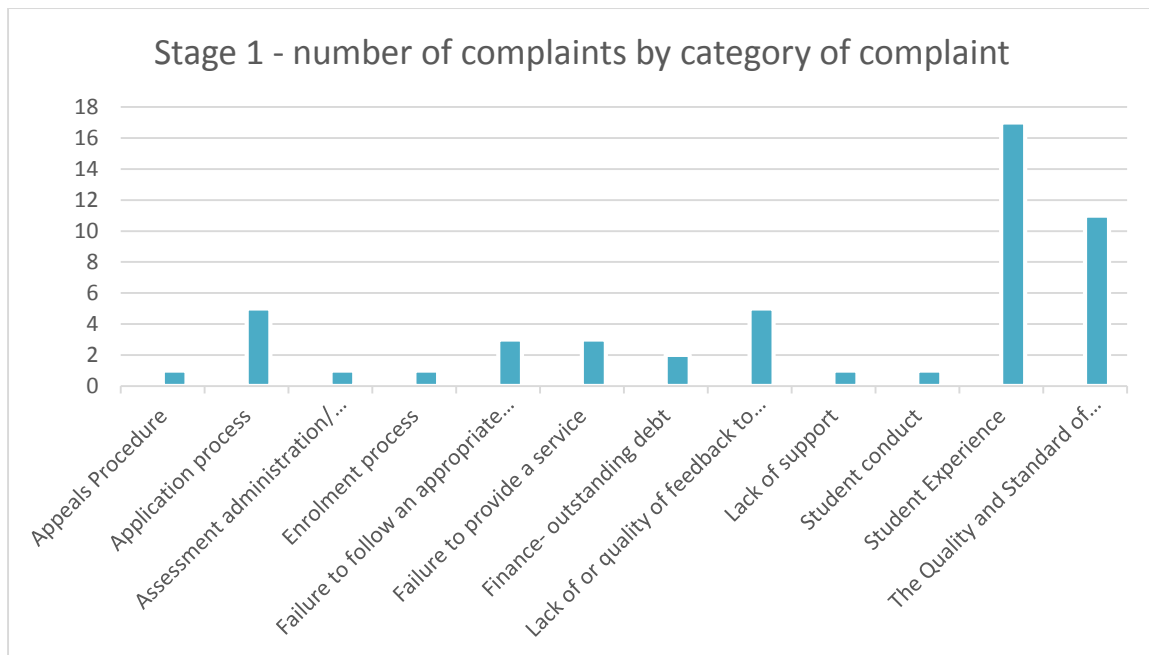
COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2015-31st July 2016

STAGE 1



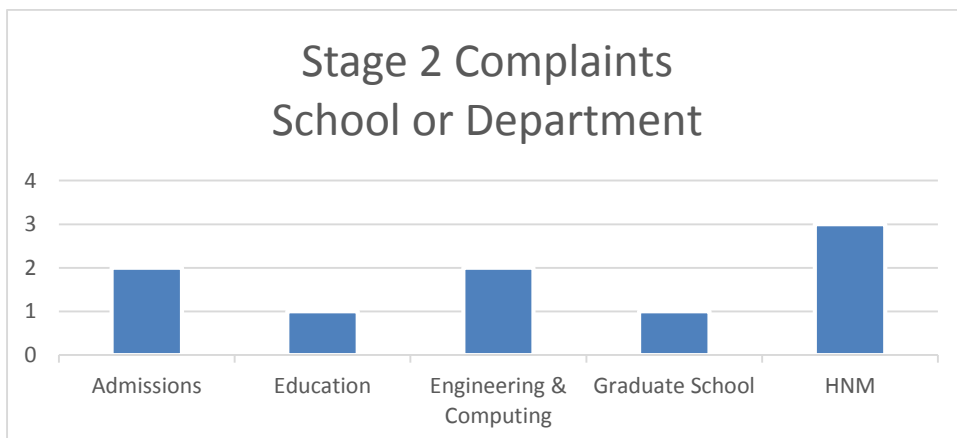
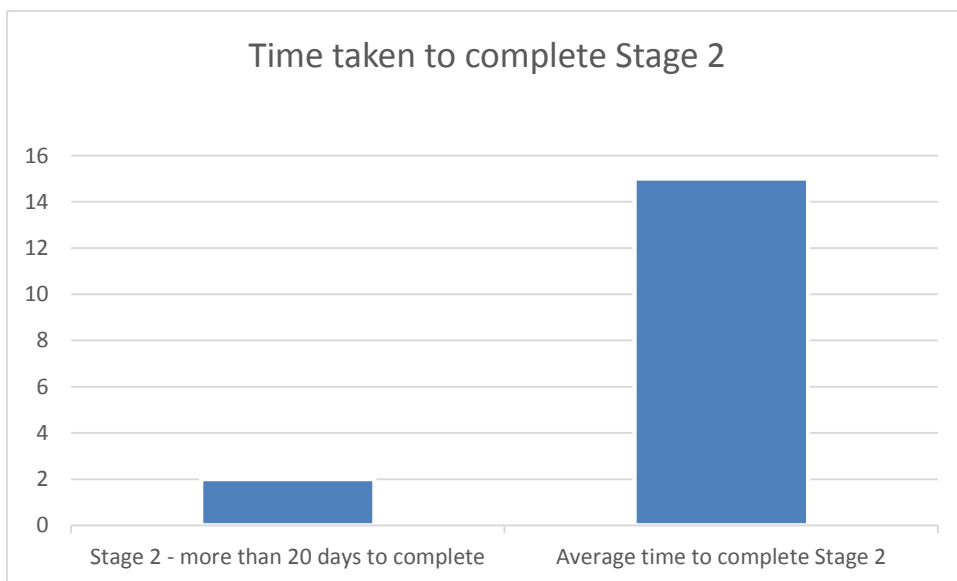
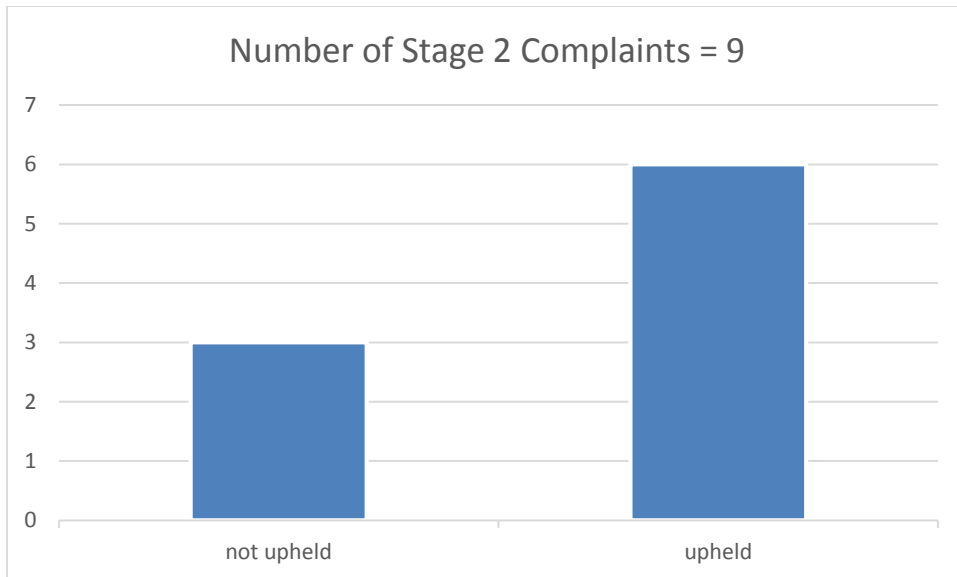
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STAGE 1 (cont'd)



COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2015-31st July 2016

STAGE 2



COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2015-31st July 2016

STAGE 2 (cont'd)

